

Remarks at the Ford Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Dearborn, Michigan
May 18, 2021

The President. My name is Joe Biden, and I'm a car guy. I got—please sit down. I got through high school and college and law school because my dad ran an agency. And I'm delighted to be here.

And I want to say something else up front: I'm standing here because, about 180 years ago, when I first got elected to the Senate, Gov—[*laughter*]*—the UAW elected me. We used to have the highest percentage of autoworkers of any State in the Nation because we have a small workforce and two giant plants, plus Mopar and a few other things going on. So I want to thank you.*

Look, and I want to thank a good friend of mine: Michigan Governor—[*laughter*]*—Gretchen Whitmer. As my mother would say, Gretchen, "God love you, dear." You've got a backbone like a ramrod, you've got a brain as big as anybody in the business, and you are so honorable. It's a delight to know you. And anything I can do—as I said to you before, I'll come campaign for you or against you, whichever will help the most. [Laughter]*

And, Ange—I want to thank Angela. We were talking backstage—backstage, yes, on the other side of the truck—and I want to thank her very much for being so gracious.

And, Rory, I know you're new to the labor movement, but you're doing a pretty good job. [*Laughter*] Where is Rory? Rory, thank you, pal. Thank you, thank you, thank you. And everyone at the UAW for being the best autoworkers in the world.

You know, I—and I want to thank Bill Ford and Jim Farley for hosting us, and investing in our workers and in our country. We're at a great inflection point in American history. How we handle the next 4 to 10 years is going to determine where we're going to be 30, 40, 50 years from now. It's one of those moments in American history. This is an incredible facility.

Representative Debbie Dingell, another dear friend—I know John is looking down, and he's saying, "We're finally getting it done, huh?" You're getting it done. Debbie, you're a—and Representative Dan Kildee—he's a good friend. Representative Brenda Lawrence.

And by the way, be careful what you say to Representative Slotkin. She knows more than you; they may be watching you. [*Laughter*] Where are you? I tease her all the time, and she's a great, great, great addition to the Congress.

And Rashida Tlaib—where's Rashida? I tell you what, Rashida—and I want to say to you that I admire your intellect, I admire your passion, and I admire your concern for so many other people. And it's my—from my heart, I pray that your grandma and family are well. I promise you, I'm going to do everything to see that they are on the West Bank. You're a fighter. And, God, thank you for being a fighter.

And Andy Levin—I know a lot of Levins. And, Haley Stevens, thank you all as well.

And I also want to thank Mayor Jim [John]* O'Reilly of Dearborn for the passport into the city. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And my buddy, Mike Duggan, he is my mayor. I got—I was sitting one day in the Oval with Barack Obama when President Obama—when I was Vice President.

* White House correction.

And he looked at me like it was just something off the—he said, "By the way, I want you to go fix Detroit." I said: "Say that again. What am I going to do?"

He said: "You can get anybody in the Government to go with you. You just do it." First call I made was this guy. You brought it off its knees; you brought it back. You're a great mayor, and you're a great friend. You've got a lot of courage, Mr. Mayor. Thank you.

And two great friends, Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters, who couldn't be here today because they're back fighting like hell: fighting for this industry and the people of this State and for labor.

Labor, industry, Federal, State, local leaders all together. That's America at its best. And that's what I so admire about what Bill Ford is doing here. And I—you know, I want to—so everything that these workers, this historic complex, and this State represent is something that I hope gets modeled around the country. It's about respect. It's about dignity, the dignity of work.

My dad used to say, "Joey"—and I swear to God, when he left Scranton, when the coal died—my dad was not a—he was a salesperson; he wasn't a coal miner. My great-grandpop was, but—he said—he used to say—when he moved to Delaware—he had to leave because there were no jobs, and he left us with our grandpop for a little over a year. And he commuted back and forth from Wilmington, Delaware, to Scranton on the weekends.

And when he got back down to Wilmington, he used to say to all of us—and I was, I guess, then, about—I was—well, I was going into third grade. And he'd say: "Joey, remember"—I mean this sincerely—"a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about your place in the community"—I really mean this—"and about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay. It's going to be okay.'"

It's not labor; it's union. Because what you allow people do is hold their heads up, make a decent living, and have pride in what they do: pride in what you build, pride in what you give this Nation.

And I wanted to be here today—the day before you unveil the next generation of America's bestselling vehicle to the entire world—to thank you. Thank you for showing how we win the competition of the 21st century. You know, how the future is going to be made—but it's going to be made here in America: made in America.

And I have to say, this brings me home. For more than 30 years, my dad, when we moved to Delaware, managed automobile dealerships in Delaware, including the Ford dealership. And, man, did I like that '57 Ford Fairlane. *[Laughter]* Oh, boy, it ain't got nothing on the F-150. But, all kidding aside, that's what got me through school.

And you know, I doubt I'd be—I doubt that it would ever contribute \$50 billion—\$50 billion—it would support about 500,000 American jobs—that 150—half of the 1 million American jobs Ford supports overall, like the 150 series.

You know, I just got a tour of the groundbreaking electric vehicle center here, along with the UAW workers. And they showed me the technology they're using to build this first-ever fully electric F-150. I was able to sit in it. Quite frankly, I—they let me see it. So I apologize to you at home, won't see it until tomorrow, but, man, you're going to like it. And I'd sure like to drive it. I wonder whether or not I can lose the Secret Service and go out to the track. But—you all think I'm kidding, don't you? *[Laughter]* The press knows I'm not. *[Laughter]*

Look, the future of the auto industry is electric. There's no turning back. And as Rory says, "The American auto industry is at a crossroads." And the real question is whether we'll lead or we'll fall behind in the race to the future; or whether we'll build these vehicles and the batteries that go in them here in the United States or rely on other countries; or whether the jobs to build

these vehicles and batteries, that are good-paying union jobs with benefits, jobs that will sustain and grow the middle class.

Right now China is leading in this race. Make no bones about it; it's a fact. You know, we used to invest more in research and development than any country in the world and China was number eight—or, excuse me, number nine. We now are number eight, and China is number one. Can't let that be sustained. The future is going to be determined by the best minds in the world, by those who break through new barriers.

You know, it has—China—the largest, fastest growing electrical vehicle market in the world, and a key part of an electric vehicle is the battery. Right now 80 percent of the manufacturing capacity of those batteries is done in China, though not the battery for the 150—the F-150. We went down to Georgia and took care of that.

That allows them to corner the market on the supplies of raw materials for those batteries. Important almost—importing almost all the lithium—90 percent—that comes from countries from—like Australia, which lead the world in mining these kinds of critical materials.

And here's the deal: It's not that China's battery technology is that much more innovative than anyone else's. Remember, our national labs in the United States, our universities, our automakers led in the development of this technology.

But today, China has a bigger manufacturing scale than all other countries. And they're using that scale to make these batteries not just in China, but they're making them in Germany and in Mexico. And they're now exporting those electric vehicles around the world, with sights on the American market.

And they think they're going to win. But I've got news for them: They will not win this race. We can't let them. We have to move fast, and that's what you're doing here.

When President Obama and I were in—when Barack and I were in office, that was what we were going to do. Remember 2009? The auto industry was flat on its back. And remember, I got criticized by the press because I was the auto guy, pushing.

Well, guess what? We were told that we'd never be able to sell American-made cars at the same rate as before. But we didn't listen. We bet on you, the American auto worker. We extended a lifeline, and we stepped up, saved more than a million jobs. Working with the auto industry, we set fuel-efficiency standards and provided incentives for folks to buy fuel-efficient vehicles.

And through the Recovery Act, we made the largest investment in clean energy and battery technology ever. And the Big Three emerged from the crisis in a position to sell millions of vehicles made right here in the U.S.A.

But then, the previous administration came into office. They rolled back the standards we set, rollbacks that the Ford Motor Company opposed. Despite bipartisan support for consumer incentives, they let the Federal tax credit expire, penalizing auto workers who were selling the most electric vehicles at the time.

They announced infrastructure week, and they announced it and announced it and announced it and announced it every week for 4 years and didn't do a damn thing. They didn't get the job done.

Folks, the rest of the world is moving fast. They're moving ahead. They're not waiting for the United States of America. Government, labor, industry—working together—have to step up. And we have a playbook that will work.

We're going to set a new pace for electric vehicles. That means reversing the previous administration's short-sighted rollback of vehicle emissions and efficiency standards, setting strong, clear targets where we need to go.

It means passing the American Jobs Plan to do three things. One, transform our infrastructure. Our infrastructure is ranked like 38 in the world. This is the United States of America, for God's sake.

We're going to put Americans to work modernizing our roads, our highways, our ports, our airports, rails, and transit systems. That includes putting IBEW members and the union workers to work installing 500,000 charging stations along our roads and highways, our homes and our apartments. The IBEW is ready to do it, and they can.

Two, we're going to boost our manufacturing capacity. That's why the American Jobs Plan invests in new and retooled union facilities: grants to kickstart new battery and parts production, loans and tax credits to boost manufacturing of these clean vehicles.

It also makes the largest investment in research and development in generations. That's going to help innovate, manufacture, and build the supply chains for batteries and semiconductors and the small computer chips that make electric trucks and cars go—to be even more reliant than they are now. It matters. The little things matter.

We saw, last night, the United States Senate voted overwhelmingly to begin work on part of the bill that I've been pushing to strengthen our innovation in infrastructure by investing in research and development and manufacturing. I don't remember the exact number, but it was pretty high. I think it was 83 to something in a bipartisan vote. That's a good first step.

And your Members of Congress here in Michigan, they know the value of manufacturing as well as anyone and are vital in pushing forward that bill and others. Never again should we be in the situation we face today with semiconductor shortages: The United States—we can't manufacture semiconductors. We were the beginning.

You know, I think some people think I'm too proud of what the United States always did and why I get so frustrated when we're sliding. But I make no apologies for it. We know these kinds of Federal investments work.

It was the Defense Department and NASA that got the modern semiconductor industry on its feet decades ago. We started it. Your tax dollars. Our own Department of Energy pioneered and transformed the battery industry when Barack and I were in office.

And through the Recovery Act grants and loans, battery prices dropped 80 percent—80 percent—because we were looking forward. We need that same mindset today. We have to look forward. And you know, we have to work to support consumers and these fleets.

That means new purchasing incentives for consumers to buy clean vehicles like the electric Ford 150—a union-made product—right here in America. But all the pieces must be made in America. It means spurring demand by converting the Federal Government's enormous fleet of vehicles into clean vehicles and supporting electric transit systems and school buses.

Folks, when I got elected, I signed an Executive order saying we're going to buy American. As President, I get to award contracts in the area of 600 to 700 billion dollars a year, from building aircraft carriers to railings that go in buildings. Guess what? And Representative Kildee knows: I'm not letting a single contract to a single company that does not hire Americans, have all American parts, and has a supply chain that is an American product supply chain.

And by the way, that's not violating any trade agreement. It's been the law since the thirties, but no one has had the courage or the nerve to insist on it being applied. It's no violation of the

World Trade Organization or anything else. If we're spending American tax dollars, we're able to say, "Buy American."

But there's a lot of exceptions in the law. If you don't have the part immediately available in the supply chain, you can go abroad and get it. And anyone in the agency can say: "I can't find it here. I'm going somewhere." Not anymore. They've got to go through the White House. Not a joke. Nobody can give that exception now. Because there's thousands of companies out there that are able to do—small companies—3, 4, 10, 15 people—who can supply those pieces if they know they can compete for them.

My brother has an expression—a guy named Pete McLaughlin, who was a great basketball player, played for Providence—was a good, close friend. He'd say, "Joe, you've got to know how to know." You've got to know how to know. We don't let the American companies know what's available to them, especially if they're small. So we're going to have a—we have an office and a facility in the White House to let people know what's needed.

And there is another thing we have in our playbook that's going to outcompete other nations, the biggest secret we have: the American worker. Not a joke. They're the finest workforce in the world. It's our ace in that deck.

Now, I know many of you watching at home are like the folks I grew up with in Scranton and in Claymont, Delaware. They feel left out, left behind in an economy and an industry that's rapidly changing. I understand it. I really do. But we will leave no one behind.

Nearly 90 percent of the jobs created in my American Jobs Plan do not require a bachelor's degree; 75 percent don't require an associate's degree. We're going to be working with companies and community colleges and technical schools and union-led apprentice and training programs to make sure that American workers will be prepared to compete with anyone in the world, just like Ford does with its workforce training center here in Dearborn.

And when we invest in our infrastructure, we're going to buy American products, materials, services from American businesses: Made in America. And we'll do everything in our power to encourage and protect the right of workers to unionize and collectively bargain.

I met with, I think it was more than a dozen CEOs of the major Fortune 500 companies. We started off, and I said, "I want to be clear with you: I'm a union guy." And every one of them but one said, "I understand." Because now they're realizing what Mr. Ford realizes: that you are the best workers available. You're the best trained. You're the most capable. And you save overall.

Bottom line: The American Jobs Plan is a blue-collar blueprint to rebuild America—a blue-collar blueprint to build America. And we need automakers and other companies to keep investing here in America and not take the benefits of our public investments and expand electric vehicles and battery manufacturing production abroad.

We need you to deepen your partnership with the UAW, pay good wages, and support communities like Dearborn across the country. We need to come together as a nation.

The Vice President and I have had a number of meetings in the Oval Office with Republican leaders in Congress and Members of Congress. We believe we can find a bipartisan deal on infrastructure. And we look forward to hearing more details of their proposal, which they're going to submit a counterproposal either later today or tomorrow to me.

But we've made one thing clear: We'll compromise, but doing nothing is not an option. Doing nothing is not an option. The world is not waiting, I say for a second time.

I'll conclude with this: Last month, I kept my commitment to convene the leaders of the major economies around the world from Russia, China, India, Japan, the European Union. I

convened them all. I think there were 48 or 50 heads of state—Presidents and Prime Ministers—a meeting I hosted, by the White House, on one of the most consequential issues facing the world: the climate crisis.

And I made it clear at the outset, as each of they—these folks came on, what I've long believed: When I think of the climate crisis—beyond its devastation to lives and livelihoods and the health of our very planet—I think "jobs." I think jobs when I think climate change, good-paying union jobs. I think about the UAW workers here today.

I wanted to make sure that the world could see that there was a consensus that we are at an inflection point in our history, and almost every major leader in the world spoke to it. If we act to save the planet, we can create millions of good-paying jobs, generate significant economic growth and opportunity to raise the standard of living for people not only here, but around the world.

But I also wanted to put the world on notice: America is back. America is back. In the competition for the 21st century, the future will be built right here in America. Look at this plant. We're moving. We're working again. We're dreaming again. We're discovering again. We're leading the world again.

We have shown each other and the world that there's no quit in America. There's simply no quit in America. And that's never, ever—it's—every time I have these, sometimes knock-down, drag-them-outs with heads of state in private—they'll say something, and I'll say: "Look, it's never been a good bet to bet against America. Never, never, never."

This is the United States of America. There's not a single thing—and I believe this with every fiber in me—that not a single thing—nothing—beyond our capacity when we act together. And that's exactly what we're about to do, starting with all of you.

And thank you for allowing me to be here. May God bless you, and may God protect our troops. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Angela Powell, forklift operator, Ford Rouge Electric Vehicle Center, who introduced the President; Rory Gamble, president, United Auto Workers; William C. Ford, Jr., executive chairman, and James D. Farley, Jr., chief executive officer, Ford Motor Co.; Muftia Tlaib, grandmother of Rep. Rashida H. Tlaib, a resident of Beit Ur Al-Foqa, West Bank, in the Palestinian Territories; Reps. Andrew S. Levin and Haley M. Stevens; and Sens. Deborah A. Stabenow and Gary C. Peters.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Ford Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Dearborn, MI.

Locations: Dearborn, MI.

Names: Dingell, Deborah A.; Duggan, Michael E.; Farley, James D., Jr.; Ford, William C., Jr.; Gamble, Rory; Harris, Kamala D.; Kildee, Daniel T.; Lawrence, Brenda L.; Levin, Andrew S.; Obama, Barack; O'Reilly, John B., Jr.; Peters, Gary C.; Powell, Angela; Slotkin, Elissa Blair; Stabenow, Deborah A.; Stevens, Haley M.; Tlaib, Muftia; Tlaib, Rashida H.; Whitmer, Gretchen E.

Subjects: Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Advanced manufacturing, promotion efforts; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Decline; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Government and private sector, coordination efforts; China : Economic growth and development; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Congress : Bipartisanship; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education ::

Community colleges; Education : Vocational and technical education programs; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles :: Battery technology, U.S. production; Energy : Hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles :: Promotion efforts; Environment : Carbon emissions, reduction efforts; Environment : Climate change; Infrastructure, national improvement efforts; Labor issues : Unions :: Labor movement and organized labor; Labor issues : Unions :: United Auto Workers (UAW); Michigan : Ford Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Dearborn; Michigan : Governor; Michigan : President's visits; Science and technology : Research and development; Space program : Aeronautics and Space Administration, National; White House Office : Vice President; World Trade Organization.

DCPD Number: DCPD202100418.